

Hi my name is _____ and this is the 8th principle minute. With the adoption of the 8th Principle, our congregation committed to dismantle racism, beginning within our walls.

Climate change is an existential threat to us all, but the most immediate impact is disproportionately being felt by BIPOC communities. Traditional ways of living are threatened by rising sea levels, falling water tables, and shrinking sea ice.

On opposite sides of this continent coastal communities are threatened. The Mi'kmaq people are losing their land on Lennox Island off the coast of Canada. As the sea level rises, their island is disappearing and what is left is more exposed to storms. Similarly, the Inupiaq people in Alaska are watching their houses fall into the sea as the level rises and the lack of ice increases the impact of storms.

Whether we look at reservations that were originally situated on marginal lands, or nations in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska that rely on traditional subsistence practices, livelihoods and lives are already being affected by climate change. Water is becoming scarce in many areas, affecting the viability of farm lands. Sea ice is retreating, making seal hunting more difficult for both humans and polar bears.

Indigenous peoples, especially in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, have been saddled with treaties that they must adhere to, but the colonialist governments frequently ignore. These treaties, even if honored, restrict nations to agriculturally marginal lands, control their ability to leverage natural resources for subsistence, and limit their ability to access and control water rights. While they are the most directly and immediately affected by climate change, they have little political power to address either the causes or the impacts.

When we speak of racial justice and environmental justice, we must see them as inextricably linked. Addressing climate change equitably requires addressing the systemic racism that treats members of indigenous communities as second class citizens with no voice and few rights.

Together we will continue this journey toward spiritual wholeness, build a beloved community, educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist. We will continue to look at our own practices, identity, and stories with a new lens to dismantle the racism in ourselves and our institutions.